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ADVENTUROUS LIFE OF JAMES GIBBONS ENDS

James Gibbons, Edmonton's oldest old-timer, inventor of the gold prospector's "grizzly" or gold separating apparatus used for years along the banks of the Saskatchewan, is dead, aged 89, at his farm west of the city, near the Country Club, where he has resided for many years.

SHOWED ROVING SPIRIT

Jim Gibbons was born in Ireland, in 1839, and at eight years of age, came to the United States. At nineteen years of age, the roving spirit which was to animate his whole life henceforward, drew him out into the great uncharted west, in the wake of the gold rush which was already carrying thousands of men to the Eldorados of the California fields.

He prospected the Fraser river, Washington Territory, until 1861, and then prospected the Bitter Root Valley, following it up with participation in the gold rush to West Bannock, Montana, in that year. Not finding the precious yellow metal, Gibbons and his partners hearing tales of the Yellowstone country, headed out there, where prospecting operations were rudely disturbed by the incursions of Crow Indians.

FLED FROM INDIANS

Outnumbered and threatened with death from some Crow tomahawk or scalping knife, the party split up and headed for Montana. Gibbon's party struck ore on what proved to be one of the richest creeks in Montana, where Virginia City now stands.

In 1864, having made a fairly good "pile" Gibbons sold out and headed for Salt Lake, Utah, but the spring of '65 brought word of the great California gold rush of that year--"the days of '65" written by Bret Harte, and immortalized in many a poem and story since--and Jim Gibbons, naturally, "hit the trail" once more.

But he didn't find the hoped-for gold, so once more his wandering feet led him over dim trails, toward the Kootenay country this time, where he prospected in vain over the Sheep Creek and Finlay river country, and the head waters of the Columbia.

Then grub ran short, and the little party, killing some of their horses, lived for a month on horse-meat, meantime following the Bow river south to its junction with the Elbow, where they hit an Indian trail going north.

STARVATION THREATENS

At the crossing of the Red Deer river, treacherous Blackfeet Indians drove off the party's remaining horses, leaving Gibbons and his friends on foot and without provisions, hundreds of miles from relief of any kind. For three days the party followed the north trail, growing weaker every hour. They were found in an exhuasted condition by John Larue, old-time trader and hunter, and taken by him to Rocky Mountain fort, an old Hudson's Bay post.

Here, 800 Blackfeet Indians were encamped, alternately fighting and making peace with their hereditary enemies, the Stoney Indians. Food was scarce, and everybody was living on rabbits, so Gibbons and his friends, borrowing

arms and ammunition, headed north once more, reaching Edmonton in November, 1865.

62 YEARS AGO

What the future city looked like 62 years ago, Gibbons has not told, but he found only French, Gaelic and Cree languages being spoken in that little Edmonton-that-was-to-be, and it was not until he met Malcolm Groat that he was able to converse in English with anybody.

From then on, the Edmonton district claimed the old gold prospector. He spent a winter with Rev. George McDougall at Victoria, and washed gold from the river with his invention, the "grizzly" making as high as $16 a day, and taking out in one summer, gold worth $800--a large sum in those simple days.

FINALLY SETTLED DOWN

Later, horse raising, farming, and trading with the Indians, took the place of the earlier occupation, and Gibbons, the gold prospector, became in his later years Gibbons, the Edmonton old-timer and farmer, taking up land near the future Edmonton, and entering heartily into all the activities of the little village that was so soon to grow into a city.

James Gibbons was president of the Edmonton Old-Timers' association in 1894-95, and has always been an active and valued member. With his passing, the oldest link in the chain of the early days is broken, but his name will live in the history of his adopted home as a man who blazed the trail for future years--as a true pal who never went back

on his word, and as a man who was always ready to share his last dollar or his last meal, with his fellows.